



# MEMORANDUM

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**To:** Mayor and Members of the City Council

**From:** Reginald Goodson, City Manager  
Brian Lewis, Interim Finance Director  
Jon Hawley, Grants Administrator

**Date:** November 19, 2025

**Re:** Consideration - Request for United Way Pledge Drive Support, Employer Matches

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***BACKGROUND:***

Like many other employers, the City of Elizabeth City conducts an annual Pledge Drive to encourage employees to make charitable contributions to the Albemarle Area United Way (AAUW). As the City Council is aware, the AAUW is a nonprofit organization that offers direct community services while also supporting 21 partner agencies. These agencies include some of the most well-established and essential philanthropic organizations in Elizabeth City, including the American Red Cross of Eastern NC, the Salvation Army, the Food Bank of the Albemarle, Albemarle Hopeline, Kids First, the Albemarle Alliance for Children and Families, Elizabeth City Habitat for Humanity, and more.

United Way pledge drives are voluntary, and work by allowing employees to set up payroll deductions for the AAUW or specific partner agencies. However, City staff anticipate giving may be down from prior years. This comes at a time when City residents are increasingly in distress due to high costs of living, reduced funding for critical services, and other challenges. This memo requests the Council authorize the City to match employee pledges dollar for dollar, up to a cap of \$8,000, for contributions benefiting the AAUW or partner agencies serving Elizabeth City.

***ANALYSIS:***

The City's AAUW Pledge Drives raised \$7,525 in 2022, \$7,001 in 2023, and \$7,283 in 2024. However, approximate 20% of dollars donated went specifically to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals of Northeastern North Carolina, which operated the animal shelter for the City, Pasquotank, and Camden. The NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services shut down the shelter this summer due to animal welfare violations.

Additionally, many vulnerable City residents are facing increasing hardship. Costs of living are rising, including food prices rising faster than inflation, compounding longstanding food insecurity. The Albemarle Alliance for Children and Families reports a “tremendous loss” of childcare services in the City and Pasquotank County, with available services proving costly and requiring long waiting lists, and increased requests for crisis assistance.

Organizations that serve some of the City’s most vulnerable residents, Albemarle Hopeline and Kids First, are also experiencing a major loss of federal funding. Hopeline is a domestic violence prevention organization and shelter operator, and Kids First is an accredited therapy provider for abused children. Both organizations report relying on federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds that are dwindling and threatening their ability to maintain services.

The Council is likely aware of many other examples of community hardship. Going into the holiday season, the City matching employee contributions would help meet some of these needs, encourage employee giving, and stabilize total fundraising. City staff also propose that, when employees pledge funds to specific organizations that serve Elizabeth City, the United Way distribute the City’s matching funds accordingly. That will appeal to employees passionate about specific causes. Additionally, City staff will continue to raffle off prizes to pledging employees; the City is raffling time off, small gift cards the Purchasing Division received as customer rewards, and small items donated by the United Way itself.

If the Council is open to this request, City staff suggest using budgeted, legislative discretionary funds; the Council used these funds at the last meeting for a contribution to the Food Bank. To ensure the City does not incur unexpected, excessive expense, we are also proposing to cap the City’s matching funds at \$8,000. Staff have also consulted with the City Attorney, who found this approach acceptable.

***STAFF RECOMMENDATION:***

By motion: Authorize the City to match employee pledges during the 2025 Albemarle Area United Way Pledge Drive, up to \$8,000, as described herein.